

Press Release

15th September 2014

Ex-serviceman makes the most of today

An ex-serviceman who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been delighted by an unexpected action-packed family getaway by leading train company CrossCountry.

Mark Isherwood, 27 from Warrington served in Afghanistan in 2010 as a member of the Royal Engineers' Counter Improvised Explosive Device Task Force. While in Afghanistan Mark witnessed a colleague and close friend lose his life in the line of duty.

Following his return from Afghanistan Mark was diagnosed with PTSD. This was an extremely difficult time for him and his family. Since then Mark has turned his life around and is now working at SkillForce, a charity that draws upon the skills of ex-servicemen to help inspire young people to succeed.

It was at the school in Liverpool where Mark works for SkillForce that his wife Dawn, mum Joyce, toddler son Charlie and CrossCountry, surprised him.

This started Mark's whirlwind journey, which included parachuting with the renowned Red Devils, an outdoor adventure afternoon with GoApe, Motor Safari driving experience and a visit to the former set of Coronation Street and more.

The highlights from Mark's day have been captured on film by CrossCountry as part of its campaign to encourage customers to make the most of today by taking advantage of its best value Advance fares now available on the day of travel, which are cheaper fares on sale up to 15 minutes before departure.

A stunned Mark said: "When Dawn walked into the hall I had no idea what was going on! To then be told that I would be taken across the country to do all these brilliant things made my day. I had a fantastic time and I'd really like to thank all those involved, especially the surprise team at CrossCountry who made it all happen."

Dawn, Mark's wife who recommended Mark for this spontaneous adventure, said: "I know how difficult the last few years have been for Mark so it was wonderful to be part of planning this surprise for him. Mark's a real adrenaline junkie so I knew he'd love all of the activities planned for him."

Andy Smith from SkillForce added: "Mark works so hard with the students and he is an inspiration to them each and every day. I can't think of anyone more deserving of this reward."

Clare Shufflebotham from CrossCountry is thrilled to see a hero rewarded: "When we heard about Mark's story we were so inspired and wanted to do something really special for him. Speaking to Dawn, it became clear that Mark was an adrenaline junkie so a day of spontaneous, action-packed fun by train seemed like the perfect way to reward him."

You can view Mark's surprise video [here](#) and join in the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag #makethemostoftoday.

-ENDS-

For further information, please contact Kelly Mortlock or Jack Storry on 020 7025 7522 or email crosscountry@grayling.com.

Notes to editors

About CrossCountry - The CrossCountry network is the most extensive passenger rail franchise in Britain. Stretching from Aberdeen to Penzance, and from Stansted to Cardiff, it calls at over 100 stations. Based in Birmingham, CrossCountry connects seven of the Britain's 10 largest cities and delivers 295 services every weekday, equating to some 32 million passenger journeys a year.

For further information on CrossCountry services visit crosscountrytrains.co.uk or follow them online via Twitter at @crosscountryuk, Facebook.com/crosscountrytrains and their student Facebook page, Facebook.com/studentraildeals.

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